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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0020

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3213

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1028

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0902

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1476

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFIA/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2081

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0665

S E C R E T ASHGABAT 000034

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB (AMB. MANN)

PLEASE PASS TO USTDA DAN STEIN

ENERGY FOR EKIMOFF/THOMPSON

COMMERCE FOR HUEPER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2018

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: FOREIGN MINISTER WANTS DETAILED
CONSULTATION WITH EEB AMBASSADOR MANN ON AZERBAIJAN

Classified By: CHARGE RICHARD E. HOAGLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Charge met for an hour January 8 with Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov (other issues reported septel). Meredov dismissed his notetaker and said he wanted to have a totally frank conversation. He intimated relations with Azerbaijan -- including the issue of bilateral Caspian delimitation -- are improving at a deliberate pace. He said he would welcome "detailed discussion" with EEB Ambassador Steve Mann how the United States can facilitate Turkmenistan's outstanding issues with Azerbaijan, including delimitation. END SUMMARY.

AZERBAIJAN: UNITED STATES CAN HELP

¶2. (C) Meredov averred relations with Azerbaijan continue to improve. The Bilateral Economic Commission will meet for the first time in late January or early February, and the agenda will include educational and cultural issues. When Charge encouraged Turkmenistan to re-open its embassy in Baku and send a strong and active ambassador, Meredov responded President Berdimuhamedov has already approved this. "We fully understand it would be good in itself and would send a strong signal to the region." He noted, however, the wheels of bureaucracy grind slowly.

¶3. (C) Most important in renewing Turkmenistan's relationship with Azerbaijan is that the bilateral Caspian delimitation working group has met three times since July 2007, and will meet again at the end of January or early February. "These meetings are without emotion or politics -- just lawyers and geologists with maps. This is very positive, in my view. I think we are making progress."

¶4. (S) In an important development, Meredov said he had not forgotten the Charge's offer last Fall for the U.S. to facilitate Caspian bilateral delimitation, "But the time was

not right." Meredov said he would welcome a visit by EEB Ambassador Steve Mann, and would be prepared "to discuss in detail" how the United States could play a helpful role between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Post would welcome a visit by Ambassador Mann to follow up on this opening Meredov seems to be providing. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND